

North Carolina State University, USA

Autumn 2019

Credit: James Roche, BComm

The UCC international office were really helpful with getting all my documentation sorted before I went over to the US. I always felt I could come to them with any questions I had before going over. My host university had been in contact with me as soon as my place was confirmed and sent me lots of information in the mail over the summer months leading up to my Erasmus.

Life at North Carolina State University was amazing, the campus was huge and was even split into different sub-campuses based on your field of study. A state of the art fitness centre with multiple aerobics rooms, basketball courts, soccer pitches, an Olympic swimming pool and two weight rooms provided me with all the necessary resources to exercise in between my classes. The classes are naturally smaller and way more interactive, open discussions between students and staff were welcomed with open arms. There was a great emphasis on extracurricular activities with loads of really interesting clubs and societies. I spent my weekends at the 50,000 capacity American football ground to watch the NC State Wolfpack (did I mention students go free?!). My favourite part of my time at NC State was that I have met some amazing people who I still keep in contact to this day.



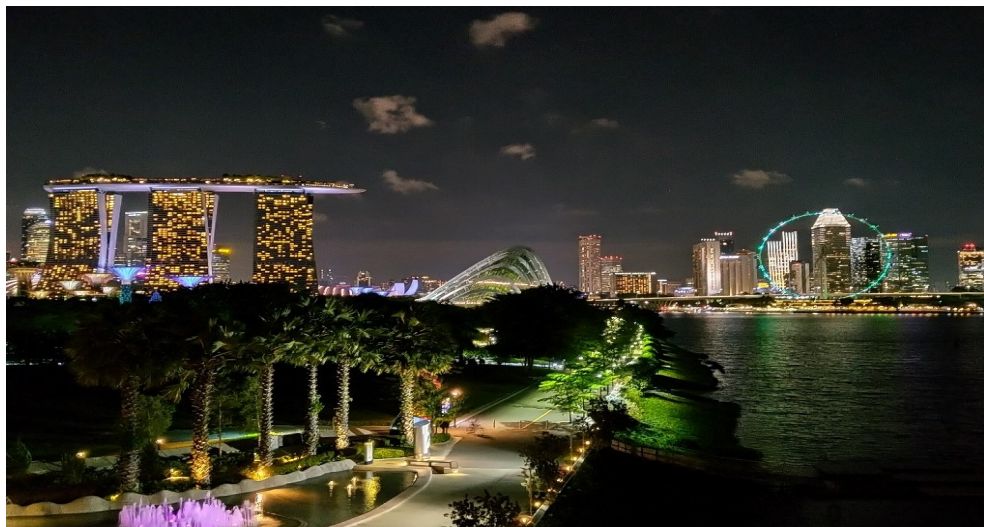
The opportunity to study in my field in a different country opened my eyes to the range of pathways that are open to me with my degree. The learning environment was different to UCC but it has taught me some excellent skills that I have been able to transfer to my current situation now.

I would recommend studying abroad to anyone who can avail of it. It was truly a life-changing experience for me and this chance may not come around for some people again. If it's something you are not 100% sure of doing, I highly encourage reaching out to as many people as possible whether it be the staff at the International office themselves, or past study abroad students. My final piece of advice would be, to be open-minded and enjoy every minute of the process because it will go by so quick!

Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
Autumn 2019
Credit: Emily Duffy, BComm

Applying to study abroad in Nanyang Technological University, NTU, was the best decision I ever made. The campus is absolutely gorgeous and the modules were both interesting and engaging. While in Singapore, I had time to not only explore the city but the neighbouring countries as well because Singapore has very easy access to South-East Asia. The cultural experience was a once in a lifetime opportunity. I would recommend NTU to anyone looking to study abroad and experience new cultures, languages, and foods.

Photo: The Singapore skyline, and the Hive, a building on the NTU campus.



Universidad de Alicante, Spain
Academic Year 2019/2020
Credit: Eric Lodge, BA (World Languages)

I was nervous beyond belief before going on Erasmus, and honestly, I was dreading it. However, seeing it through was maybe the best decision of my life. The friends I made in Alicante are some of my favourite people in the world and I can't bear to imagine never having met them. Even though it's over now, I still look back on my Erasmus memories almost every day and I can't wait to see my international crew again.



Université Pierre Monde Alpes/Grenoble IAE, France
Academic Year 2019/2020
Credit: Colin Sisk, BComm (International) with French

Application process and support from UCC and your host university.

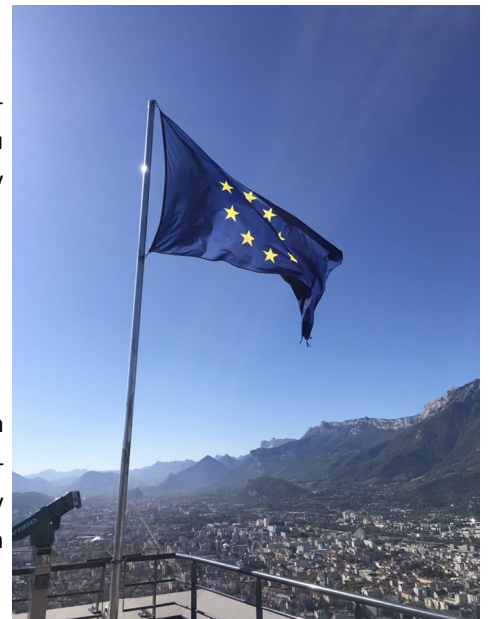
The application process is quite tedious, and it may seem that the forms are endless, but my advice would be just to fill them out as they arrive in your mailbox. If you cannot fill them out immediately, set yourself a reminder on your calendar/wall etc. I was studying for exams in the library the summer before my Erasmus and my friend was sprinting around UCC trying to get signatures, print documents and fill out forms which he should have done in the previous months. Trust me, you do not want to be that person

In terms of my host university (Université Pierre Monde Alpes/Grenoble IAE) they were a lot slower at responding than UCC. Be patient, send the email again and be as polite as possible (I would always advise to write the emails in both French and English to avoid any miscommunication). Unfortunately, I found the stereotype to hold true in that the French love bureaucracy and they will do things in their own time so be prepared for that.

Finally, I would advise to keep a folder with all important documentation, as well as emailing all these documents to yourself. If you have them on your email you can access them anytime which may save you a lot of hassle.

Life at your host university

I am currently in my final year of Commerce (international) with French and I was lucky enough to spend my Erasmus year at Université Grenoble Alpes, in the Grenoble IAE faculty. I arrived in July 2019 (a month earlier than my UCC classmates) and we left in March 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic.



I liked my time at IAE, the communication could be improved a lot, but my classmates were all very nice and welcoming. It was nice to be in one building for all classes and the fact classes were smaller too made for a nice change. The biggest downside I felt was the fact that each module was only worth 2.5 ECTS credits, rather than 5 like in UCC. this increased our workload as we had more modules to do. Most of the modules I did were manageable and not overly difficult with the exception of "Marchés financiers et systèmes bancaires and conception et réalisation des sites web." It was very nice to study business topics in French as we do not do that in UCC. Once you keep a little bit on top of the workload you should be fine but remember that the overall expe-

How you felt throughout your time abroad

I loved my time abroad and wish that I could return. I felt fantastic throughout my time abroad and was lucky enough to have really integrated myself into French culture by playing with the local rugby academy team. This challenged me to greatly improve my spoken French and it helped me settle into life abroad. I would definitely recommend joining a local/university team or society as it's a great way of immersing yourself into the French university culture. I personally didn't feel homesick but some of my UCC classmates did. This is a natural feeling as the whole experience can be quite overwhelming. The best way to get settled in is to explore the city, make new friends and go on mini adventures. We were able to ski in the winter which was an amazing experience. Obviously as the COVID-19 situation spiraled in March 2020, we all felt quite anxious and we ended up leaving abruptly.

Did you feel more prepared for 4th year?

In terms of French yes absolutely, my standard of fluency increased greatly but my standard of written French did not improve so much.

Do you recommend it?

I would 100% recommend it to everybody. Cork is a fantastic city but there are many more amazing places across the world which need to be experienced also. Grenoble was an incredible place, and I can't wait to go back and see all of my friends. The experience makes you go outside of your comfort zone in a positive way as you grow and develop as a person. You may also be lucky enough to make lifelong friends with both UCC and fellow Erasmus students. Trust me it is worth going on an Erasmus study abroad period.



What advice would you give UCC students interested in studying abroad?

Firstly, I would say to dive headfirst into it. Put yourself in situations where you must work outside of your comfort zone, approach randomers and speak the local language as much as you can!

The second piece of advice I would give is to not judge anyone. I'm saying this because it is so easy for one to look down upon someone who doesn't speak the local language well for example, but as long as you try your best, you shouldn't be judged by anyone else. Nobody is perfect, some people will adapt more quickly than others, some people will pick up the language faster than others so whatever the situation, just remember to be kind to others and not to judge. You never know how someone is really coping with the situation.

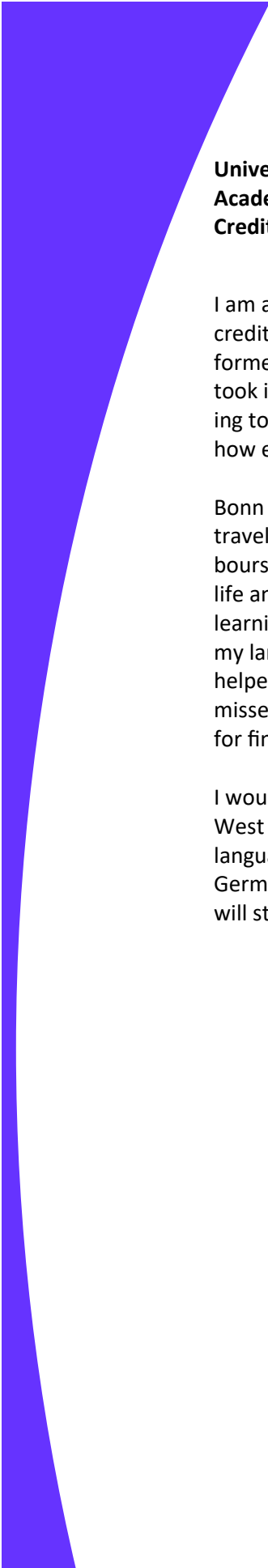
Finally, do as many activities as you can, go on as many trips as your saved money will allow you, enjoy being a tourist in the city you will call "home". It will be over faster than you know so make the absolute most out of the whole experience while you can!

I wish you all the very best of luck and feel free to email me with any questions you may have about the year abroad, especially if you're lucky enough to be heading to Grenoble in France!

Regards,

Colin Sisk

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Universitat Bonn, Germany
Academic Year 2019/2020
Credit: Amy Sexton, BA International

I am an Arts International student studying European Studies (30 credits) with German (20 credits) and Spanish (10 credits). I spent my Erasmus year in Bonn in Nordrhein-Westphalia in former West Germany. When I started my undergraduate in 2017, my Erasmus year, which I took in the third year of my degree, seemed so far away, but the year itself flew! Only by having to turn my back on Bonn after six months due to the COVID-19 crisis did I fully understand how enriching living abroad was and how much I enjoyed the experience.

Bonn is a city similar to Cork in size, but different in so many other ways. I absolutely adore travelling and discovering, and Bonn was the perfect place to be, with links to nearby neighbours such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France. Discovering a new way of life and a new university system was a huge challenge, but making mistakes is part of the learning process. I was able to take Spanish in Bonn through German, so I was able to improve my languages simultaneously, and the friends from all over Europe I made along the way helped me through every situation. I had so many opportunities to do new things that I rarely missed home, and being a year older with more experience of other ways of life prepared me for final year by making me more independent, mature and open to new challenges.

I would recommend ERASMUS to anyone, and Bonn was a lively place to be. In the former West German capital, I was able to think about my final year dissertation while improving my language skills in a multicultural environment. I would advise anyone considering ERASMUS in Germany to go to Bonn- the six months I spent there formed an unforgettable experience that will stay with me forever.

Application process and support from UCC and your host university.

The application process and support from UCC was fantastic. There are a number of documents and forms to fill out prior to going on Erasmus, but I can testify that UCC provided the necessary information to help with getting through this 'red tape.' There were also useful information sessions which gave us an idea of what challenges to expect. My exchange university Utrecht (UU) gave me accurate and up-to-date advice on the housing situation in the Netherlands which was very useful in saving money!

2. Life at your host university.

Life at UU was fantastic, they provided a range of interesting courses. The humanities campus was right in the centre of the city, a stones throw away from my student accommodation. My accommodation housed twelve people, and had six bedrooms, so I had a roommate for the first time! I thought this would be a problem, as I like my personal space (who doesn't), but I was really lucky that my housemates were great people who I remain in touch with. My roommate, from the Finnish Arctic Circle was a great travel companion throughout the year and going abroad was worth it for meeting him - a life-long friend! Utrecht is the most cyclist dense city in the world, so it is necessary to buy a bike to get the full experience (you can find reliable second hand bikes for a reasonable price very easily)! It also has a train station that puts some airports to shame, so travelling around Europe from there is a viable option! Utrecht is a beautiful old-style European city, but also has everything a student could possibly want from a social point of view! It's a student's paradise.

3. How you felt throughout your time abroad.

I am not exaggerating when I say I had the time of my life while in Utrecht! I was living with an interesting group of people, who came to feel like family, there were always places to go and things to do and the academic work was not so overbearing that I couldn't enjoy living in the place. The only time I felt down was when my housemates had to return home and then I had to return home because of COVID-19 - but a generational plague probably won't affect anyone who has the chance to go abroad in future, I hope!

4. Did you feel more prepared for 4th year?

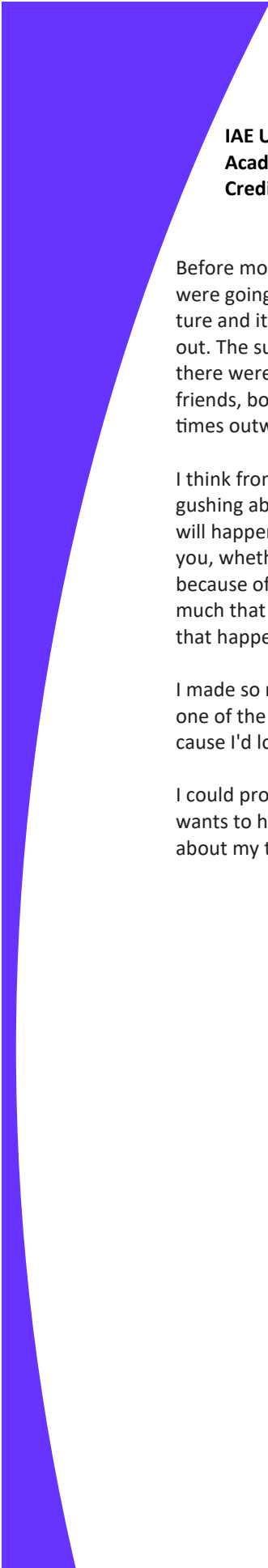
Absolutely. I was young starting at UCC, so this extra year gave me the chance to gain experiences that allowed me to mature as a student and a person, before 4th year. The humanities department in Utrecht are high-quality and most helpful. There is a focus on groupwork in the Netherlands, but I thought that different approach served me well!

5. Do you recommend it?

This is the easiest question I will answer while at UCC. I absolutely recommend studying abroad to any UCC student. I have a bank of unforgettable memories, journeys and a number of lifelong friends around the world because of the year abroad. I came back from the Netherlands as a better person than when I left, that is certain!

6. What advice would you give UCC students interested in studying abroad?

First of all, do your research. Had I not looked at Utrecht's campus, its accommodation options, its affordability, before I left, I would not have had the wonderful experience I ended up having! Once you go abroad, try and set up all the things you use regularly at home, bank, gym, etc. This will help you settle in to life abroad much faster! Make every day count - my year was cut short by COVID in March and I would really have regretted it if I had saved all my travelling until May or June! I have so many great memories from the year abroad that it is genuinely difficult to remember them all! You don't have to visit a new country every week to make the days count either, I remember searching for a can of spray-paint with my roommate so he could finish an assignment just as vividly as any of my longer journeys!



IAE Universite Grenoble Alpes, France
Academic Year 2019/2020
Credit: Emma Daly, BComm French

Before moving abroad, it felt like there was a lot of uncertainty and we didn't know a lot about where we were going or what was going to happen. Looking back on it, I've realised that this was part of the adventure and it meant that we had to learn to be able to adapt and work on our own initiative to figure things out. The support from UCC and our host university also made it easy to adjust. During my time abroad there were definitely ups and downs but between the two universities, the support of my family and my friends, both old and new, the hard times did not last long and they were easy to get past and the fun times outweighed the hard times by a million.

I think from the moment I arrived in France, every time I've been talking to someone since, I've been gushing about the experience. The year is what you make it and you have to be open to everything that will happen. The most helpful thing I heard before I went on Erasmus is that no matter what happens to you, whether it be your luggage being stolen, your debit card getting locked or being sent home early because of a pandemic, you have to just take a deep breath, let it out and forget about it. There's so much that can and did go wrong but I was determined not to let it ruin my year and I took everything that happened in my stride.

I made so many friends from all over the world, learned new languages and about new cultures. It was one of the most amazing experiences and I'm so jealous of anyone who has the opportunity to do it because I'd love nothing more than to go back and do it all again.

I could probably write an essay about my time in France and how amazing it was but I figure that nobody wants to hear about that. If I can help in any other way please let me know, I'm more than happy to talk about my time in France.

Universite Jean-Moulin, Lyon 3
Academic Year 2019/2020

Credit: Lauren Ní Fhloinn, BCL Law and French

My name is Lauren, and I spent my Erasmus year in Lyon, France. I loved the year I spent in France and would definitely recommend studying abroad to others. It was a wonderful chance to discover a new city, culture and language, and was a great base for further travel on the Continent.

I'd heard a lot of students talk about their experiences while on Erasmus before I left, but I don't think I was prepared for some of the difficulties I would face. I was more homesick than I expected and universities in France are generally less student-orientated than in Ireland, and don't have the same standard of facilities and services. It was very daunting trying to take classes in French with 400 other students and exam season was stressful – but survivable! It also took a while to find my feet in the city in general, and for it to start feeling like home.

In the end, the positives far outweighed the negatives and I'm much more independent and confident after the year I spent in Lyon, but I want to stress for future students that there will be ups and downs, and that that's just part of the experience!

